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ABSTRACT

Language learning games are dynamic, provide a change of pace, can be played individually or in groups, and can be integrated into classroom learning activities. Game-production activities are initially teacher-centered; gradually, students can work in groups with the teacher as resource person. During production activities, the four language skills can be practiced, and a more positive classroom atmosphere is created. Another advantage to game production activities is their flexibility. They can be adapted to the age and proficiency of the students and become a useful tool that can stimulate students to become actively involved in communication activities in the target language. Complete directions are provided for producing and playing four game-activities in an English as a second language class. The examples here are for various ability levels; each game can be adapted somewhat to become simpler or more complex. (AMH)

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*ESL Teachers and Students Making and Playing Games**

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ANTOINETTE GAGNÉ
McGill University

The goals of instruction in ESL will vary greatly depending on the age, needs and interests of the learners. Many of the basic language skills needed by second language students can be learned and practiced through games. You may think games are activities that are only useful on Friday afternoons as attention getters when the students are tired; however, games can be dynamic and can be integrated into your daily lessons. Language games need not be stereotyped as loud activities where students jump around in the classroom. Students playing language games can work alone, in pairs, in small groups or in large teams. The classroom atmosphere, therefore, will vary according to the type of game in which the students are involved.

Some language games involve very little preparation and no materials; others necessitate careful planning and the use of materials such as game boards, cards or blocks. Games of the latter type are not frequently played in second language classes because of the temporal and/or monetary constraints most teachers face. Purchasing game materials is almost impossible due to the recent increase in school budget cuts, and making the materials is also difficult because of the inordinate amount of time involved in the production of a series of game boards or cards for an average size class of thirty students. A suggested course of action to overcome this lack of time and/or money is the integration of the production of game materials into the language class. Later in this article, examples of various types of games will be given, as well as the possible ways of integrating their production and use into the ESL curriculum.

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* Paper presented at SPEAQ Conference, Quebec City, June 1982.

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One might initially think that any class time allotted to the production of game materials is lost and that this time would be better spent explaining or practicing particular aspects of English grammar. In some cases, this could be true. However, if the production of such materials is properly integrated into the lesson, it can help to develop all four language skills to varying degrees. In addition, an activity that includes the production of games will be useful because of the change in pace it provides to classroom routine.

At the onset, a production activity is teacher-centered since all the instructions and materials are provided by the instructor. However, once the students have understood the task at hand, they can work individually, in pairs or in small groups while the teacher goes around the class acting as a resource person. Once the game materials are produced they can be used and reused as the need or the desire presents itself.

During material production activities, the four language skills can be developed and reinforced. Listening skills are always practised as all the instructions concerning the method of production and the materials to be used are given orally by the teacher, in English. Although some activities may only involve listening, at times, other language skills can also be practised. For example, speaking skills will come into play when students work on production in pairs or small groups. Discussion will be necessary in order to define tasks within the group, and to decide on the specific content and nature of the material being produced. Reading skills may be reinforced if it is necessary to follow written instructions, use the dictionary, or find other sources of written information in order to produce the game materials. Writing skills will be practiced if the students are asked to list words, create question-and-answer sequences, or write stories or instructions for the game being prepared. Thus it becomes clear that game production activities are not only useful because they help to save time and money, they also help to develop and reinforce language skills, and serve as excellent communication activities.

Another advantage of allowing students to produce classroom materials is the creation of a more positive learning atmosphere. Working this way can give students greater self-confidence by knowing that you and the other students are willing to use and share materials they themselves have made. The knowledge that the materials being

built will be used by other classmates and in the future can motivate students to produce higher quality work than when asked to do an assignment that only the teacher will look at. Participating in the creation of materials thus can help to develop a more positive attitude toward ESL as well as encourage higher standards in the quality of work produced.

A further advantage of such activities is their flexibility and adaptability within the daily teaching context. Production activities can vary in length and complexity depending on the learners involved. This is important because students only benefit from activities adapted to their level of ESL. Due to this adaptability and flexibility game production can be used with learners of almost all ages and levels.

With regard to flexibility, game production can be linked to whatever aspects of language that are being taught in class at a particular time. Production can involve reinforcement of one particular language skill, grammar point, language function, vocabulary list or theme, or it can be used as an activity to integrate practising various language skills, grammar points, vocabulary items, or functions. In addition, once the materials needed for the language game have been produced, they can be used immediately or kept for future use in the class.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, it becomes clear that there are many advantages to playing language games in the classroom. They are a useful tool because they are fun, provide a change of pace from the daily routine, and stimulate students to become actively involved in practising and communicating in the target language.

Having explained the rationale for making and playing games in the ESL classroom, I will now give various examples of games ESL students of various levels of proficiency could produce and subsequently use. The games suggested here are not all original. However, what is new is the idea of getting students actively involved in the game production. The following examples are aimed at students of various ability levels. However, in each case, the level of difficulty of the English involved could be made either simpler or more complex, depending on the linguistic proficiency of the students.

Activity 1

Scrambled Words, Sentences, Paragraphs or Dialogues

Participants:

i) The whole class can participate if grouped in pairs
ii) ESL students of 8 years old and older will enjoy this activity.

Prerequisites:

i) To play 'scrambled words', the students must know how to spell certain words in English.
ii) To play 'scrambled sentences', the students must know the basic word order of at least some English sentences.
iii) To play 'scrambled paragraphs or dialogues', the students must know how to link sentences together to form simple paragraphs or dialogues.

Objectives:

i) To provide practice in all four language skills.
ii) To reinforce correct spelling, word order and paragraph or dialogue formation in English.

Materials:

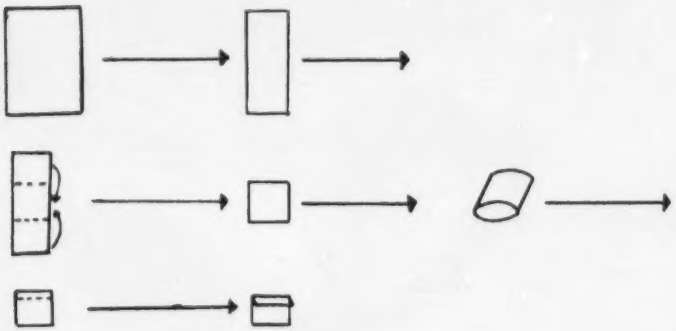
Each student will need three to four sheets of paper and a pen or pencil.

Procedures:

Explain to the students that they are going to learn how to make an envelope from a sheet of paper. These envelopes will be used to store the game materials, which the students will make later.

Give the instructions on how to make an envelope orally to provide additional listening practice.

Here are the instructions for making an envelope:



- Take an $8\frac{1}{2} \times 11$ inch sheet of paper
- Fold the sheet in half lengthwise
- Now fold it in three and fit one end into the other to form a tube
- Then, fold the top section ($\frac{1}{2}$") of your tube to form the flap of your envelope.

There are many other ways of making paper envelopes. Therefore, you should use the technique you find most convenient. The advantage of the procedure described above is that tape and scissors are not needed.

Divide the class into groups of two.

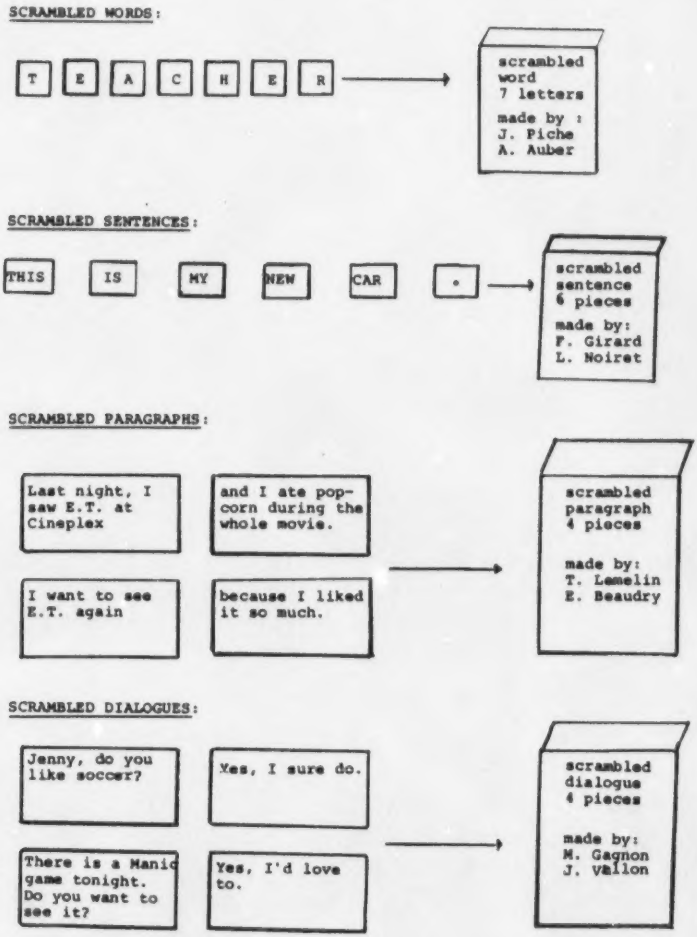
Now, depending on the level of the students, ask each pair to prepare either:

i) a list of 5 words
ii) 5 unrelated sentences or
iii) a 4 or 5 line paragraph or dialogue.

Encourage the students to check their spelling and sentence construction before they come to see you for correction.

Once you have checked each team's work, ask them to write out their words, sentences, paragraphs or dialogues on separate pieces of paper as illustrated below. The students should then scramble the papers and put them in the envelopes they have made.

For example:

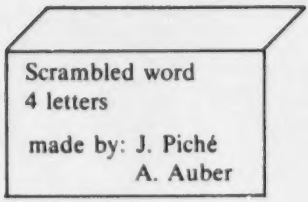

SCRAMBLED WORDS:
T E A C H E R
scrambled word 7 letters
made by : J. Piche A. Auber
SCRAMBLED SENTENCES:
THIS IS MY NEW CAR .
scrambled sentence 6 pieces
made by: F. Girard L. Noiret
SCRAMBLED PARAGRAPHS:
Last night, I saw E.T. at Cineplex
and I ate pop-corn during the whole movie.
I want to see E.T. again
because I liked it so much.
scrambled paragraph 4 pieces
made by: T. Lemelin E. Beaudry
SCRAMBLED DIALOGUES:
Jenny, do you like soccer?
Yes, I sure do.
There is a Manic game tonight. Do you want to see it?
Yes, I'd love to.
scrambled dialogue 4 pieces
made by: M. Gagnon J. Vallon

When the students have finished doing this, pick up all the envelopes and the sheets on which the students first wrote their words, sentences or paragraphs. Make sure all the sheets and envelopes are well identified so that they can later be used by the students for correction.

For example:

J. Piché
A. Auber
1. fantastic
2. thick
3. crazy
4. teacher
5. walk

and

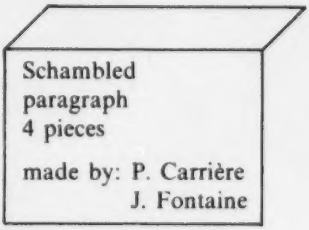


OR

P. Carrière
J. Fontaine

Yesterday I met Paula in the park. She invited me to her party. I'm glad she invited me because Greg will be there. He's the nicest guy I know.

and



Explain to the students that they will play a game with these envelopes.

Here are the rules of the game:

- The aim of the game is for each team to correctly unscramble the contents of as many envelopes as they can within a 15 minute period.
- All the envelopes will be placed at the front of the class at the beginning of the game.
- Each team can only work on one or two envelopes at once. Therefore, when a team has successfully unscrambled the content of one or two envelopes and has recorded its answers, the envelopes must be returned to the front of the class.

- After 15 minutes, all the envelopes must be returned. At this point, the students can correct their answers. One team can correct another team's work, or the teacher can check all the answers. The correction procedures you will choose to adopt will depend on the age and maturity of the students involved.
- After such a game, the students should finish up with a record sheet that looks something like this (For scrambled sentences):

J. Lavigne and H. Côté
1. There are three beautiful girls in the class. by L. Malenfort
2. I hate going to McDonald's. by M. Beaufort
3. I wish I could fly. by B. Dupont
4. Last week I went skiing. by N. Trudel

Activity 2

Information Gap Game

Participants:

i) The whole class can participate if divided in groups of 2
ii) This activity is suitable for students in Grade 4 and up.

Prerequisites:

The students must be familiar with the vocabulary and structures or functions and notions used during the game.

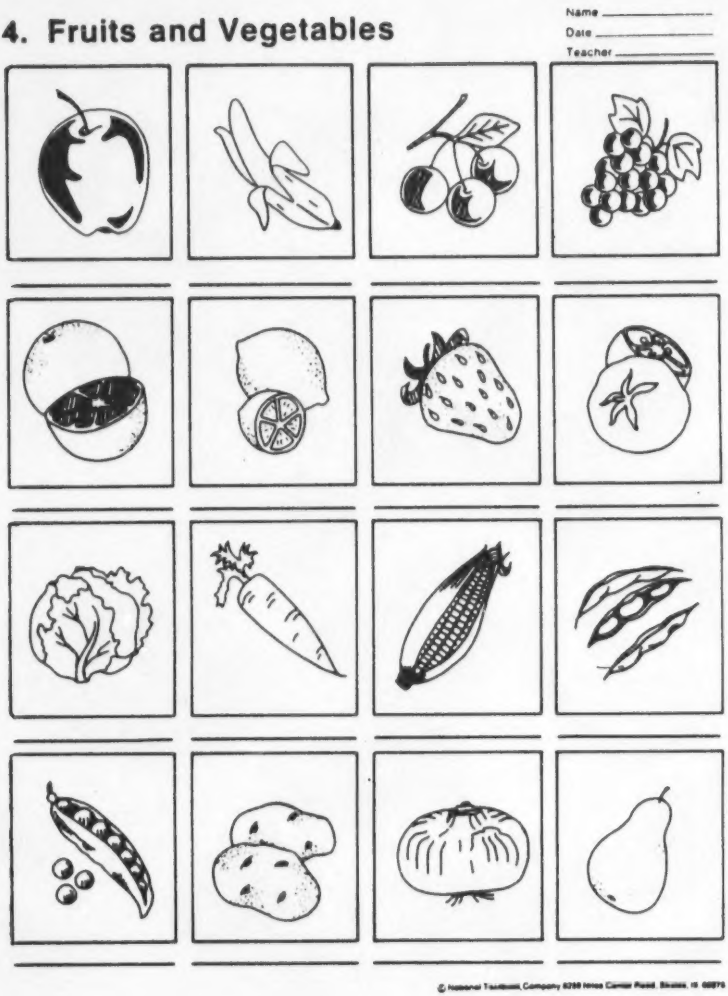
Objectives:

i) To provide practice in listening and speaking
ii) To reinforce vocabulary and structures or functions and notions in English.

Materials:

Each group of students should have:
- 1 pair of scissors
- 2 identical picture sheets
- 2 sheets of regular paper

For example:

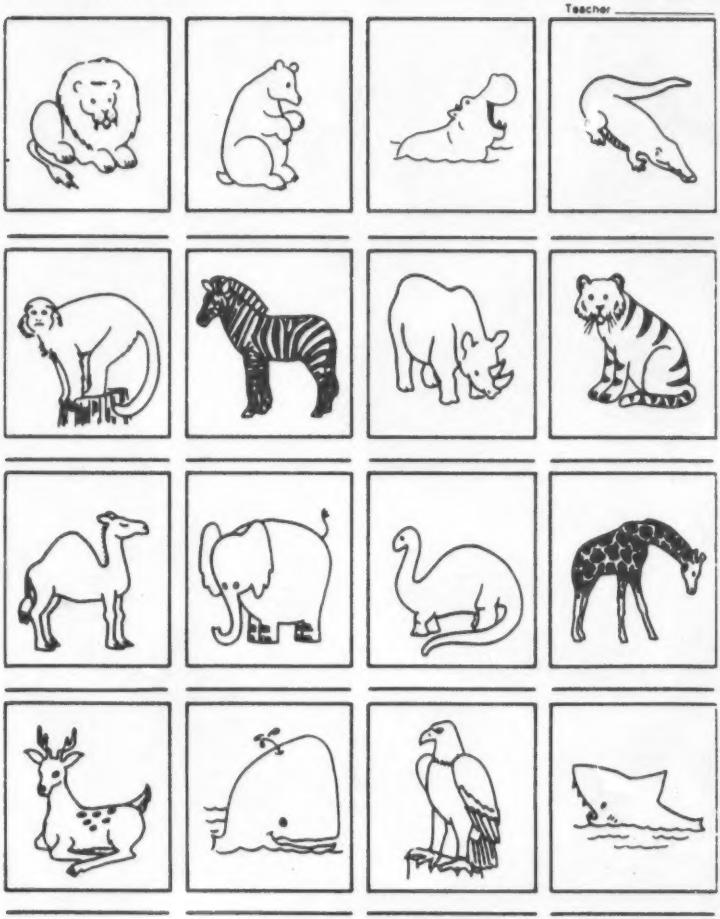


OR

10

25. Animals—B

Name _____
Date _____
Teacher _____



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Procedures:

Explain to the students that they will first make the materials they need for the "Information Gap Game".

Give them the instructions orally to provide more listening practice.

Group the students in pairs.

Teach them to make an envelope from a sheet of paper (see Activity 1).

Each team should make two envelopes.

Next, give each team two identical picture sheets. Tell them to cut out the pictures and place a complete set of pictures in each envelope.

OR

Ask each group to draw their own sets of pictures and put them in two separate envelopes.

What you decide to do here will depend on the amount of time available and the age of the students.

Once the students have made their materials, explain the rules of the game and let them play for 10 to 15 minutes.

Here are the rules of the "Information Gap Game":

- In each group, the two students should sit back to back or in such a way that neither will see what the other is doing.
- Each student should have an envelope with identical contents.
- Student A should tell Student B what to do with the contents of the envelope while doing it him/herself.
- For example, if each student has an envelope containing 10 pictures of wild animals, the game could go as follows:
  - as Student A puts the tiger at the center of his/her desk, he/she should say to Student B "Put the tiger in the center of the desk".
  - then, as Student A places the elephant below the tiger, he/she should say to Student B "Put the elephant below the tiger".

- The game continues in this way until all the animals have been placed on the desk.
- After having given thorough instructions to Student B, Student A can check how well he/she has explained what he/she was doing and Student B can see how well he/she has listened by comparing the set up of the animals on their respective desks.
- The roles are then reversed and Student B gives instructions while Student A listens.

Note: The vocabulary and structures or functions and notions practiced during such a game will vary according to the contents of the envelopes and the level of the students.

This game can be played with envelopes containing various geometrical shapes of different colors and sizes, pictures of furniture, pictures of an imaginary wardrobe or any other type of pictures that might be of interest to your students.

Activity 3
Question and Answer Card Game

Participants:

i) The whole class can participate if they are grouped in pairs
ii) This card game is appropriate for students in Grade 4 and up.

Prerequisites:

Students must know how to make at least simple question - and-answer sequences such as:
"What's your name? My name is Lisa."
OR
"Can I have a hamburger? Yes, you can."
OR
"Where are you going? I'm going to the store."

Objectives:

i) To provide practice in all four language skills
ii) To reinforce the formation and recognition of appropriate question and answer sequences.

Materials:

Each pair of students should have:
- 20 small cards (approximately 2" × 3")
- 2 pens or pencils

Procedures:

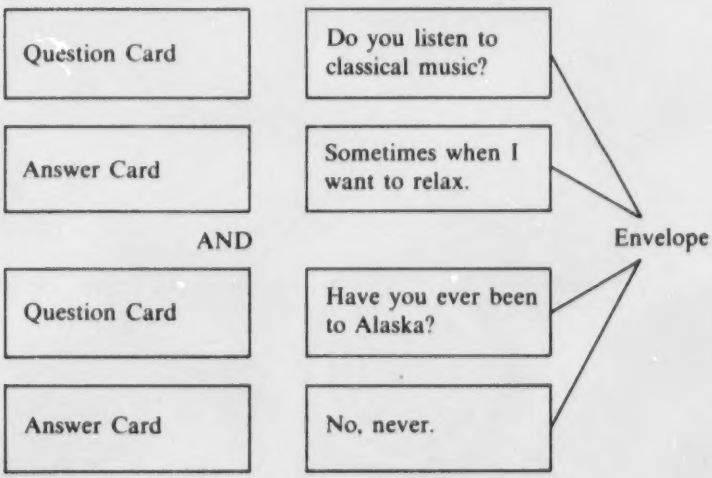
Explain to the students that they will make the question and answer cards necessary for a card game that will be used by another team of students.

Divide the students into pairs and give them 15 to 20 minutes to make the cards.

Explain that each team must come up with 10 questions cards and 10 corresponding answer cards.

All the question cards should be written out by Student A and all the answer cards by Student B.

Then have the students label the question and answer cards and put the two sets in an envelope to make sure that none of the cards are lost.



The teacher should check the sets of cards before they are used by other teams of students to make sure that incorrect or inappropriate question-and-answer sequences are not included in the card games.

Once the card games have been labeled and checked, give each team a set of cards, explain the rules of the game and let them play for 10 or 15 minutes.

This card game is suitable for beginners as well as advanced students because the question-and-answer sequences will vary according to the level of the students making the cards for the game.

Here are the rules of the "Question and Answer Card Game":

- Each group of two receives one set of cards.
- Student A takes the question cards and Student B the answer cards.
- Neither student should look at his/her cards.
- Both students then take the top card off their pile and turn it over.
- They should read both cards.
- If the question and answer go together, the first student to say SNAP earns a point.
- However, if the cards do not go together, each student immediately turns over the next card in the pile.
- Both students keep on turning over their cards until there are no more.
- They then pick up their pile, reshuffle the cards and begin again.
- The winner is the player with the most points after three full rounds.

For example:

If the following cards turned up together, the first player to yell SNAP would earn a point.

Do you like lobster?	I sure do.

OR

Did you see Erica last week?	Yes, I saw her at the party on Saturday.

However, if the following cards turned up together the players would immediately turn over the next cards in the pile.

Do you like eggs?	To the country.

OR

Where is the library?	Toni's Restaurant on King Street.

Activity 4
Game Board Fun

Participants:

i) The whole class can participate if divided into groups of 3 or 4.
ii) Preferably Grade 4 students and up.

Prerequisites:

i) The students should be familiar with the language used when playing a board game e.g. miss your turn, go ahead two spaces, go back to the start, roll the dice etc.
ii) They should also know the vocabulary and structures or functions and notions used in the game.

Objectives:

i) To provide practice for all four language skills.
ii) To reinforce specific vocabulary and structures or functions and notions.

Materials:

Each group of students should have:
- 1 piece of cardboard preferably 10" × 12" or larger
- 1 set of colored pencils or pens
- 1 picture sheet
- 1 piece of construction paper
- 1 pair of scissors
- 1 bottle of glue
- 1 sheet with model gameboards

Procedures:

Explain to the students that they will make a gameboard that will eventually be used by all the students in the class.

Give all the instructions orally to provide practice in listening.

Divide the class into groups of 3 or 4.

Give each group the materials they need to make one gameboard.

Encourage them to work as a group dividing tasks up evenly and using as much English as possible during this time.

Give them 30 to 45 minutes for this activity.

While the students are working on this, go from group to group to make sure all the students understand what is expected of them and give any help that may be needed.

When each team has finished give them small pieces of colored cardboard to use as tokens and small cardboard dice made during a previous lesson (instructions given below).

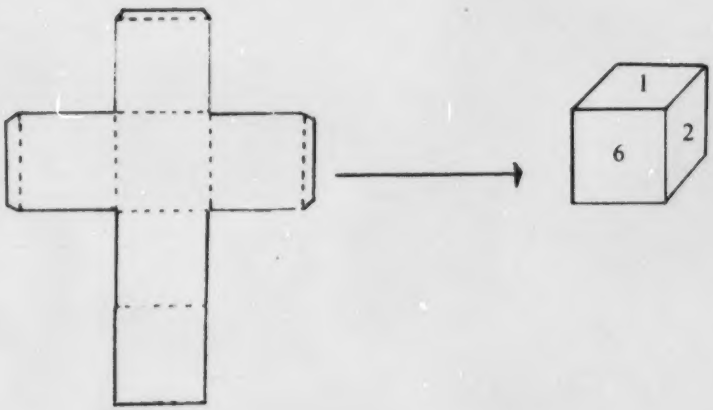
Then, give the students another 20 to 30 minutes to play with the new gameboards following the rules you have set up.

When a group finishes playing with one gameboard they may exchange gameboards with another team.

The rules of the game should vary according to the age and level of proficiency of the students. You should establish the rules ahead of time to avoid arguments about this.

Instructions for making a cube:

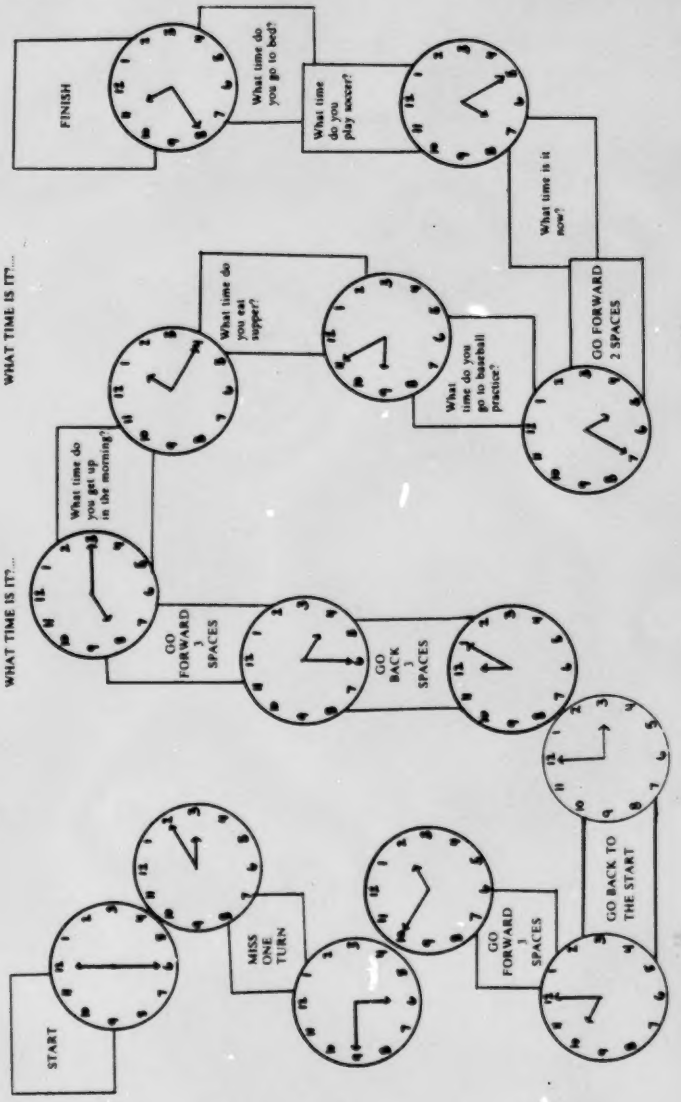
– Draw the following figure on a sheet of construction paper.



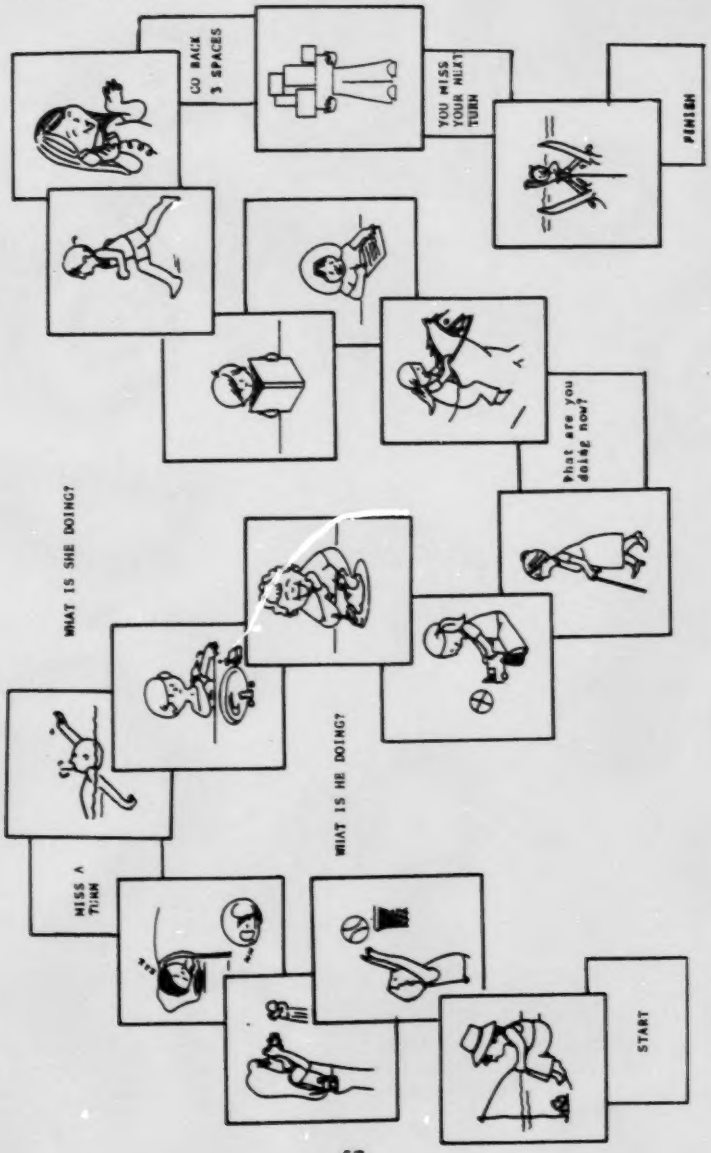
– Cut it out.
– Fold along the lines as indicated on the diagram to make a cube.
– Glue it together using the tabs.
– Wait for the cube to dry.
– Then write a different number (1-6) on each side of the cube.

Model Gameboards

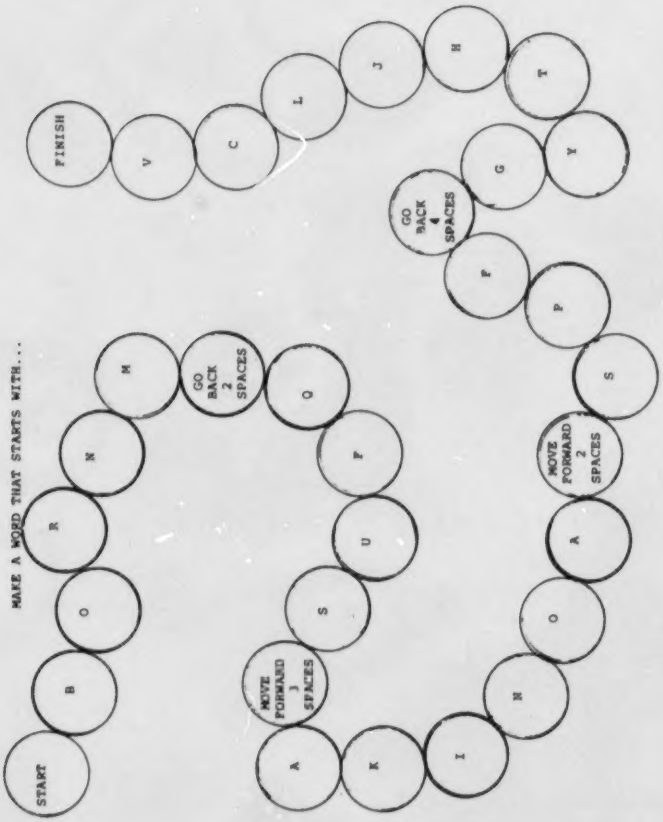
The Time Game


START
MISS ONE TURN
GO FORWARD 1 SPACES
GO BACK TO THE START
GO BACK 3 SPACES
GO FORWARD 3 SPACES
GO FORWARD 2 SPACES
What time do you get up in the morning?
What time do you eat supper?
What time do you go to baseball practice?
What time is it now?
What time do you play soccer?
What time do you go to bed?
FINISH
WHAT TIME IS IT?...
WHAT TIME IS IT?...

The Action Game



The Word Game



All the illustrations used in the 'Information Gap Game' and in the 'Action Game' come from:

Gabel Liebovitz, D. *The basic vocabulary builder.* Skokie: Illinois, National Textbook Company, 1982.

Antoinette Gagné is a professor at McGill University in the Department of Education in Second Languages. She has both a B. Ed. and a M. Ed in TESL from the same university. She has experience teaching ESL to children, adolescents and adults in various schools in Québec.